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Minute Dramas

The Kodak at the Quarter

By Martha Young

PHOTO BY CORAL McPHERSON, SELMA, ALA.

"SHININ' MARK"

Minute Dramas

The Kodak at the Quarter

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OCT 12 '21

Minute Dramas

The Kodak at the Quarter

by

Martha Young

MONTGOMERY, ALA:
THE PARAGON PRESS
1921

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These verses have appeared in

CENTURY MAGAZINE, BOOKMAN,
INDEPENDENT, JUDGE, CIRCLE,
PICTORAL REVIEW, NEW YORK TIMES

and other Magazines

To
My Brother
Dr. Henry Tutwiler Young
Whose mental gifts, culture, courtesy
and constant sympathy make
bright many an hour on
the road of
life.

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THE KODAK AT THE QUARTER

Somethin' 'nother done got loose on de Place,
Jumpin' right up in ever'body's face;
Des tetch off de trigger of one li'l' box—
And it snatch up de niggers in droves and flocks!

It's wo'se 'n de Sheriff gwine 'round in de fall,
'Potin' on de darkeys one and all;
Ever' thing dat a nigger hand do
Dat devil marks it down fer true.

It got us dar hoein' and dancin' and prayin',
It got us plantin' cotton, pickin', ginnin', and weighin';
You stand 'roun' arguin' you won't be took—
But—tetch!—and dar! You's print in de book!

'Tain't now even no use to run—
(Dat box done made a trade wid de sun)
Pomp run—hit ketch him wid his heels in de air—
He's runnin' dar yet twel I do declare

When you meet Pomp he looks right tire twel yet,
Ever' time you see Pomp he's wipin' off de sweat—
Pomp all time pantin' and wipin' his brow—
(Dar's a conjure spell put on Pomp, I 'low.)

It 's enough to make a 'spectable man
Stay all day in de dark—if he can;
It make me b'lieve dese de Las' Days sho'—
'Caze atter all dis de devil can't do no mo'.

Done 'range to take a nigger on de jump or de run,
Done press into service de Lord's own sun!
But de reason I 's'pize dat devil—Kodak
Is des 'caze it love to paint a nigger—black!

Plantation Ethics

THE CHRISTMAS TURKEY

Uncle Isham speaks:

Ole Solon got converted
  And larned to trust in prayer;
Whene'er a 'sire struck him
  He took and knelt right dare!

And now wid Christmas comin'
  He 'gin an' earnest pray:
Lord, send to me a turkey
  To eat on Christmas Day!"

A solid week he wrastle
  Wid des dat only prayer,
He seed no turkey comin',
  And Christmas nearly dare.

So Solon change his prayin',
  Not de sperrit, but de word:
"Lord, send me *to* a turkey—'"
  You think dat prayer was heard?

He prayed it warm and earnest,
  And kep' his faith right bright,
And Solon go *two* turkeys
  Dat very Christmas Night!

THE RULING PASSION

Old Master tells it:

Poor Mammy Jane lay ill in her bed,
She must have good food the doctor said.
There came by chance the friend in need,
Heard the prescription said: "Yes, indeed,
Mammy must have a nice little chick,
Mammy's grandson must go for one quick,
There must not be the least delay—
And right here was the dollar to pay—"
No sooner the lady's goodbye was said
Than Mammy called feebly from her bed:
"Here, Boy, come gimme dat dollar, I say—
And go get dat chicken—in de natchal way!"

PROOF POSITIVE

Uncle Isham:

No, I won't watch out de Ole Year Night,
Niggers in church is a plum out sight,
Tryin' for to ac' like dey was white.

No good to ax me, no good to coax,. .
Dat 'ligion belongs to rich white folks;

Dat Peter and John and James and Mark
Dey was all as white as sycamore bark—

You don't believe it? I'll prove it so—
('Caze if one was white all was, you know.)

Now tell me dis: Don't de Good Book say
Peter heard de cock 'twixt night and day

Crow *three* times? Well,—if Peter'd been black
Dat chicken wouldn't crowed but once—a fac'—
'Fo' Peter'd a-had him in a crocus sack!

THAT GOOSE

Old Master speaks:

The Goose was luscious, the goose was fine,
The darkey preacher was asked to dine—

With a glow of expectancy over his face,
He carved the goose and asked the grace:

"Brudder," said he; "dis a rich piece er meat,
It's bodacious juicy and teetotal sweet,

"Whar did you git such a goose, Brer Joe?"
The dark host straightened and answered so:

"Sah! I ax you fust,—den I'll ansah you next—
Y' sermon was good, whar'd you get de text?"

"Well,—somewhar, Brudder, 'twixt Colossus and John,
And de fust Revilation and Ephesion—"

"Yas, Brudder, *I* tell you, I got dis goose
Betwixt two suns sorter flyin' loose—

"Which flock it b'long wid can't tell wid truth,
But it rest 'twixt de Judge's and Ole Aunt Ruth!"

AT THE BAPTIZING

Uncle Sampson speaks:

Was you at Baptizin' yitsiddy, Sal,
  When they put down ole Uncle Isham's gal?
'Twas de joyfulles' meetin' I ever is seen,
  I went in de ox cart wid old man Green.

When dat preacher put Susan in de pool
  She come up hollerin' and shoutin' in de cool:
"Onct I was lost! But now I is foun'!
I seed Saint Gab'iel as I went down!"

Dat half-wit Carter,—he mos' a plum fool,—
  He been baptize and des come out de pool,
He say: "Dat wan't no Saint Gab'el, Sis Su—
  Dat was des a mud-turtle,—I seen dat, too!"

THE PLANTATION CHOIR

Preacher Man speaks:

Brudder Brown, us has a choir to St. Mary's,
Us 'ud like to have you in it, if you please;
Us has de chorus and de solo, too,—
Now which-a-one best suits yo' voice and you?

Brudder Brown swelled out his splendid chest,
Pulled up his collar and pulled down his vest:
"Don't, Brudder, put me in dat chorus dar,
'Caze de way I sing best is—des singular!"

A PLANTATION PRAYER

Preacher Man:

Lord, come and bless dis meetin' now,
Us needs a blessin' heah, I vow!
Come, 'mejiate, Lord. Oh, come right down!
And convict dese sinners grinnin' 'round,
All fleein' from Grace and pushin' back—
Des as quick for fire as hay in a stack!
Come, 'mejiate, Lord, oh, come right quick:

Come des as sudden as de drappin' of a brick!
Don't pester, Lord, to come 'round by de do',
Whar de sinners is crowdin' back mo' and mo'—
Des come th'oo de house-top! Bust right th'oo!
I'll pay for de shingles if You do!

A PLANTATION SERMON

Uncle Isham:

Two mighty 'zorters were Juba and John,
Of Hickory-Stand-Church and of Zebulon.
Ole Juba he preach by Inspiration,
Ole John he preach by de slow Creation.
"I can preach," said Juba; "on any text,
Dis-a-one suit me as good as de next;
Mo' 'n dat I can preach on any word
Dat any among you heah is heard."
It was des de time of de Big Spring 'Vival,
Just time thought John to squelch his rival:
"You say inspiration yo' mouf will fill
To preach on a word. Well. Preach on a—Pill!"
Dar! Dat broke de jug and spilt de molasses!
But Juba took off and wiped his glasses—
He splunged den into dat cur'ous text
Like he wa'n't even a little bit vexed:
"Oh-a-a-a!
Oh, my brudders, I come heah to preach tonight
Dat dar's pills for all sorter human plight,—
Dar's pills for de hearin' and pills for de sight,
Dar's pills for de conjure and for de snake-bite,
Dar's a pill to cure and a pill to kill,
Dar's a pill for all sorter bodily ill—
But dar's des one pill for yo' soul's good will
And, brudders, dat pill is de sound—Gospil!"

THE CHRISTIAN GUN

Preacher Man:

Y'all ax what is de Christian's gun?
It is de ole Bible Book, my son!
Wid Tes'ment New and Tes'ment Ole,
You gotter study dem bof, I'm tole.

It's des like my muzzle loadin' gun,
Got Hind and Fo' sight bof,—not one:
When I want to get de ve'y best aim
De Hind and de Fo' bof gets dey claim.

De gun to shoot 'viction th'oo and th'oo
De sinner is dat Ole and dat New—
I'm aimin' it now—right straight and true—
Watch out, sinner, dat it don't hit you!

THE PRAYER OF THE WEATHER WISE PARSON

Uncle Isham:
De niggers' corn it was burnin' brown,
Even dey cotton was wiltin' down;
Seem like de clouds done forgot how to rain,
Us look for weadder, look in vain.
At last de darkeys got all togedder
And 'cide dey'll pray for some damp weadder.
Dey call on ole Bre'r Baker to lead,—
He 'low he don't want to do it, indeed,
He 'low de Lord know his business best—
But de folks wouldn't let dat ole man rest
'Caze dey know he was a power in prayer—
So he give consent and knelt right dare:

"Lord, Lord, dar's a drought in dis dry land,
Famin' is feared here for beast and man,
My Lord, oh, won't you raise up yo' han'
And sprinkle de rain on dis heah lan'?
My Lord! Yo' Good Book is full of rain—
From Kiver to Kiver and back again—
De reign of David and de reign of Saul—
De Bible tell's us about 'em all!
For heah in de One-Eyed Kings, I see
De story of David and how he
Had a reign in Israel forty year,
And furderer mo' it do appear
He'd a reign in Hebron for seven year—
And many mo' in Jerusalem,—
De oil roll down to his garments hem!
But, Lord, we don't want no rain like dat!
We don't want no swisher-swasher,—oh!
We don't want no gulley washer,—oh!
We des want a drizzly drazzly shower
Dat'll scurcely hurt de cotton flower!

Lord! De dust is risin' in dis land',
It's blindin' beast and it's blindin' man.
De leaves are parchin' up overhead,
De rabbits are pantin' in dere bed—
And, my Lord, Yo' Good Book's full of rain—
In One-Eyed Sam'l and Two-Eyed again,
I read of de reign of Ammonite,
De Hittite and de Amalekite—
How dey reign on Canaan's happy sho'
Some hund'ard and fifty year and mo'—

But, Lord, we don't want no rain like dat
We don't want no swisher swasher, oh,
We don't want no gulley washer, oh,
We des want a little drizzly, drazzly shower
Dat'll scureely hurt de cotton flower!

Lord, dar's smoke and fire in de sky,
De horizon's brassy far and nigh,
De corn's boot 's scursely holdin' water,
De cotton 'm wiltin', wizzlin' sorter—
And, my Lord, yo' Good Book's full of rain—
In de Three-Eyed-John I read it plain:
A thousand year de Dragon'll reign
Befo' peace 'll come to earth again:

But, Lord, we don't want no rain like dat,
We don't want no swisher, swasher, oh,
We don't want no gulley washer, oh,
We des want a little drizzly, drazzly shower
That'll surely hurt de cotton flower!"

Ole Baker's voice went up and went down,
De darkey's got to shoutin' around;
But soon as he pray dat pow'ful prayer
He riz up and scent de sultry air,
Sez he: "I prayed for rain like you said,
I'd better been hoein' hard instead—
I prayed for rain, but you all won't get it
Twel wind change and de new moon let it!"

Lights and Shades of Plantation Lovemaking

THE CHRISTMAS CAKE WALK

The Lover speaks:

Come, darkeys, take your places on the cabin puncheon
floor,
Come cut yo' cunnin' capers if you never dance befo'!
Des watch Miss Seraphina when she trip de Punkin'
Vine,
Des watch her how she skip along and twist and twirl
and twine;
It seems des like my heart string is tied to her little
shoe—
For she pull it and she tug it ever' step she take she do!

Oh, Seraphina, Honey, come and lay yo' hand in mine,
Be sho' my heart strings echo ever' note de banjo whine!
Let's make a Pretty-Motion, let's dance de Tu-re-lu:
No two can step togedder, gal, so well as me and you!
Now hear de fiddle startin' up its sing-a-sing also—
You be de singin' fiddle, gal, and I will be yo' beau!

Oh, let's be partners, Seraphina, down de lover's lane,
Whar dem what loves is happy in de sunshine and de
rain:
Den even if us hoein', gal, adown de cotton row
'Twill seem like us is dancin' if us move togedder so—!
Den be my wife, my Seraphina, I will be yo' dear—
And won't it seem like Christmas den, Christmas all de
year!

THE PROPOSAL

Young Mistress speaks:

A very shy fellow was dusky Sam,
As slow of talk as a typical clam;
He couldn't make love to his Angeline,
Although his love grew like Jonah's gourd vine.
So he brought then the telephone to his aid,
To assist his wooing the "nut brown maid."

"Miss Angeline?—er—Is dat you?" called he.
"Yas, dis is Angeline. Yas, dis is me!"
"— —I—wanter say—hold de 'phome—I loves you!
—Is you on de wire?—Does you love me, too?"
"Yas—yas—dis is me—course I loves my beau—
Say—what's de reason you wanter know?"

"I wanter ax—will you marry me—true?"
"Yas, course I will.—Hold de 'phome—who is you?"

THE STRANGENESS OF IT

Uncle Isham speaks:

Just atter de War it seemed to Uncle Dan
Dat keepin' a boadin' house was a good plan;
He went to Mobile and he opened one dar,
And de niggers flocked to it fum nigh and far.

One day ole Dan he come in fum de city
And de sight he seed it sho was a pity—
His daughter Lu on de porch he found her
Settin' wid a new boarder's arm around her!

Ole Dan he 'sclaim: "What you doin', Lu?
You, gal, I puffec' shame er you!
You tell dat nigger right now to his face
To take his arm from around yo' waist—"

La! den! What you think dat Lu gal say?
She ansah her daddy back dis-away:
"Tell him yo'sel'f! 'Caze dat nigger man he
Is no mo'n a puffec' stranger to me!"

THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

Pomp speaks:

You's got back, Massa, from de town—
You fetch de may'age license down?

Dem license read for Sal and me?
Dat's pity, Massa, 'caze you see

Sence you been gone I change my min'
And 'clude I'll ma'y Adeline—

You take dem license, change de name,
Lemme ma'y on dem all de same—

Can't do dat? Cost two dollars mo'?
Oh, no, sah, Massa. No, sah, no—

Des you leave de name dat's written dar Sal's
Ain't two dollars diffuence 'twixt dem gals.

THE MARRIAGE FEE

Uncle Isham:

Parson, what's de cost of ma'yin' a man?
Des tell yo' price. I'll meet it best I can

You say: Make it des what dis bride is wof?
Parson, put it dat way it sho is rough!

If I gotter pay de wof of dis wife
Den ma'in' is got me ruint for life!

Why dis wife's wof de whole of creation—
She is wof all of a big plantation—

Wof a pair mules and de wagon, too,—
Heah's half-dollar, Parson, won't dat do?

MONEY AND MATRIMONY

Young Mistress:

Old Rhett was hoeing my garden in May,
He took off his hat, stopped his hoe to say:
"Mistis, dar's a thing I wanter ax you,
'Tis a thing dat pesters dis darkey true:
What you 'spose women folks wants wid money?
When us feeds and clothes 'em it is funny
Dat dey keeps pest'rin' a man 'bout money;
Now dar is my wife, dat dar Yaller Caddy,
Ax me for a dollar las' gone Saddy,
And Sunday 'twas two, and Monday 'twas fo',

"What does she do with so much, Uncle Rhett?"

"I dunno, Miss, 'caze I gin her none yet—
And mo'n dat I ain't a-gwineter, I bet!"

THE PLANTATION WIDOW

Uncle Isham:

Aunt Cinthy owns to good four score,
And she has few years several more;
But she done buried her old man,
And he done left her house and lan'.

Si Cinthy has a many a beau,
But she is hard to suit for sho'!
Dis one too ole, dat one mo' so—
And dis is de man dat she told: No!

Dis one too full of joke and laugh,
Dat one got nothin' but a wobbly calf;
And dem what has dey sho' wants mo'—
So de man she takes is rich old Joe.

PLANTATION SERENADE

The Lover Sings:

Coffee grows on a White Oak Tree,
  Rivers all stuff wid brandy,
Oh, come, my love, and go wid me,
  I'll feed you off sugar and candy—

Miss Cora she loves sugar and tea,
  Miss Cora she loves candy!
Miss Cora she can whirl all 'round,
  And kiss her lover so handy!

Cinnamon's cheap as hick'ry chips,
  Flowers all stuff wid honey,
De bees all come and freely sips—
  And my pockets all full of money—

Miss Cora she loves sugar and tea,
  Miss Cora she loves candy!
Miss Cora she can whirl all 'round,
  And kiss her lover so handy!

Ginger grows on a 'tater-vine,
  Trees all drippin' wid 'lasses!
De muscadine will make us wine,
  And we'll hollow out gourds for glasses!

Miss Cora she loves sugar and tea,
  Miss Cora she loves candy!
Miss Cora she can whirl all 'round,
  And kiss her lover so handy!

Spices grow on a goober-vine,
  Pretty gals thick as pindars,
Oh, what's de cause you can't be mine
  Wid my banjo's under yo' winders?

Miss Cora she loves sugar and tea,
  Miss Cora she loves candy!
Miss Cora she can whirl all 'round,
  And kiss her lover so handy!

TAKE MY HEART BUT NOT MY HOARD

Young Mistress:

Aunt Chainy's wedding day had come,
I think it was her third,
Aunt Chainy came to tell me she
Was happy as a bird!

Hands folded on her ample waist,
She stood all sunny joy,
And told me of her married bliss—
All gold without alloy.

"I thanks you for your present, Miss,
It sho' is nice and sweet;
La! Yassum, it des like you said,
My happiness complete!

Now, Miss, I brung my money dat
I is done save dis year,
To ax you for to keep it, Ma'am,
I know it be safe heah.

Me keep it 'wid a husband now
You think I safely can—
I risk no money in my house
Wid dat strange nigger man!"

BABE'S MARRIAGE

Aunt Chloe speaks:

Yas, she's ma'y'd, my Babe, my Liz—
My chile's may'ed now. Dat she is,
Jimmy Dick's got her now for his.
Not no nigger gal never befo'
Had a weddin' like my baby—No!

Ma'y'ed in de White Folks Sunday School,
May'ed by White Folks Pra'er Book rule—
By young Master, de Bishop, yes—
And he wo' his Black Satin Dress!

I hardly knowed my li'l Marse John,
He had so much Black Satin on—
He also wo' some scarfs of lace—
But I know 's same sweet, smilin' face.

Of co'se he may'ed his Mammy's Babe,
(Like he'll lay Mammy in her grabe)
I wisht you had a seed my chile,
Dressed all in white and flowers dat while.

Ma'y'ed she was wid a rale gole ring,
  Marched in while all de White Folks sing:
Ma'y'ed, you say, wid great Eclat?
Tain't so. She may'ed by no Eclat—
'Twas a—'Piscopal Bishop dat done it.—Dar!

THE GREATEST WEDDIN'

Aunt Chloe:

Yas'm. 'Twas de greatest' weddin' to be sho'—
Dat's gal's dress it scrope on de flo',
I never seed sech another long trail,
Ever' thing even to her shoes was white—
And her cotton gloves they fit so tight!

Yas'm, I was proud of my grandchile, sho'—
Dar was weddin' gues'es dar some hund'ard or mo';
Dey had fo' preachers a-standin around,
From coal black clean to ginger-bread-brown!
Li'l Jake liketer rid my son's grey mule down
Des fetchin' dat pair license from town.

Yas'm de finest weddin' supper to be sho',
Six cakes icened and den some mo';
Dar was Trimblin' Truck and 'Possum and Pie,
An' Persimmon Beer twel I thought I'd die!
Dar was chicken stew and de rabbit hash,—
Oh, dat supper cost my son some cash!

Yas'm, dose darkeys did dance to be sho',
You ought seed de couples on dat flo':
Dey cut Pigeon Wing and de Mobile Buck,
Dey Jump Jim Crow and de Dodgin' Duck:
Dem nigger's dance twel de Eas' was bright,
Some un 'em dance twel 'twas broad day light.

Yas'm 'twas de greatest weddin' to be sho'—
Like doin's endurin' de war befo'.
And I must be satisfied, you allow?
And my grandchile's safely may'ed now?
Well'm, not exactly,—as you might say,—
'Caze de bridgegroom he des stayed away!

Plantation Pictures, Politics and Philosophy

UNCLE ISHAM THINKS—AND TALKS

Uncle Isham:

Yas' I'm free—and I'm hongry, too!
If I had-a knowed 'twas sech a great todo
To keep one nigger in meat, 'bacon and cloze,
And to try to keep him sheltered from out-a do's
I'd a-never give my vote to be free,
If Marsa Abe Lincoln had-a come ax me!

Yas, I'm free—and I'm hongry, too!
And I'm 'bout to work myse'f to death for true;
My Ole Massa did give me a little rest—
(I dunno 's 'fo' de war ever work my best!)
But look like'a now dat I'm my own man
I try get all de work out myse'f I can!

Yas, I'm free—and I'm hongry, too!
And settin' heah a-studyin' like I do
It seems to me queer dat our ole massas fit
To keep Yanks from freein' sech a cost'y sit—
If it had-a been me I'd fought to save
Myse'f from owin' a single nigger slave!

Yas, I'm free—and I'm hongry, too!
I'm de worst sorter 'spence to myse'f for true—
Don't keer how wag on de weather and de worl'
I gotter keep workin', strivin' in a whirl—
Lord! I had mo' time to think 'bout my soul
When Massa kep' my cloze an my body whole.

THE OFFICE SEEKER

Uncle Isham:

Marse Lewis you is in dat Congress now,
Dey is proud for to have you dar, I 'low!
Won't you he'p dis ole nigger man along,
Des gimme a note in de cho'us song:
You 'members, Marse Lewis, how I n'useter drive
Yo' Grandma's carriage when she was alive?
Well,—I ain't forgot to handle de rein—
Wanter be coachman on de road again!
I'll drive you fine, Marse, I do declare, if
You gimme rein seat in dat High Tariff!

HIS PARTY

Uncle Isham speaks:

What's my party? I got none, Boss,
You may take my vote for des what it cos'—
My White People was de 'vidin' up kin',
So I couldn't tell which party to jine.

Ole Master was a ole line Whig,
Him and Henry Clay rode in de same gig;
Marse John, his son, was Jackson Democrat,—
You know dat party? You is hearn of dat?

Marse Joe, he was a mugwump, man,—
Marse Dock he leaped de fence,—he a 'Publican,—
Marse Bill, well, he was a somnambulist—
He gin us mo' trouble dan all de rist.

IN THE DOCK IN DIXIE

Old Master:

Cuffey stood in the dock in Dixie,
Light fingered fellow he and tricksy.

The Judge was ready to call the case,
Wih dignified mien and solemn face

He asked: "Is that boy there the accused?"
Beneath that stern eye Cuff grew confused:
"Oh, no, Massa Judge, I ain't *dat* now—
I'm des only de boy dat stole de cow!"

AUNT DINAH'S PICTURE

Aunt Dinah:

No, I don't want my picter took,
Gwine all round in de paper ánd de book—
Ever-body knowin' des how I look.

You paint 'em good! I know you do,
Make ole folks look as good as new—
You tuck Jincy dressed for de Barbecue!

And dey say Sis' Jane's her ve'y spit,
Dey say folks can't tell her fum hit—
But dat don't change my mind a bit.

I'm gwine ter stay—des me—like I be,
If de Lord had—a wanted *two* er me
He'd—a made me *twins* at fust, you see!

UNCLE SAMPSON'S RULE

Uncle Sampson speaks:

Give you some tobacco? I ain't got a bit;
Chewin' 'bacco's somethin' I done long since quit;
I tell you it's saved me many a dollar
Since I quit chewin' what I couldn't swaller!

So heah's a tune you can fit to any song,
For it's nigh about as broad as 'tis long:
Don't jump a coon you can't run to de holler,
Don't waste time chewin' what you can not swaller!

Don't start into nothin' you can't clean out do,
Don't lift any load you can't tote clean on th'oo:
Don't turn down der road you ought not to foller,—
And don't chew on nothin' you cannot swaller!

AT THE SIGN OF THE SUNFLOWER

Aunt Chloe speaks:

How come so many sunflowers round my do'?
Folks say dey bring good luck, but I dunno.

Yas. Luck is wid de Lord. Dat's what I know;
But den dese flowers is easy to grow!

Dey sho' do make a mighty shinin' spot—
I dunno wh'e'er it show from heav'n or not—

But if God see it,—wouldn't it be queer
If He would drap a blessin' down right here!

AGE VERSUS YOUTH

Aunt Dinah:

Young folks has a mighty min'
  Old folks fools dey *thinks;*
Dey wants to bate down ole folks wine,
  And teach ole heads new kinks!

Ole folks has some 'sperience, an'
  Young folks fools dey *know*
  Can't no mo' teach 'em sense dan can
  Teach June time how to snow!

NIGGER AND DE CORN PONE

Uncle Isham:

If death hide in de corn-pone
  What's a nigger gwine to do?
To hear of dis pellagra
  Gives me de ague, too!

"Corn pone" and "Hoe cake"
  "Dumplin's" in de pot,
"Johnny cake" and "Aig bread"
  "Spoon bread" fire hot—
"Ash cake" and "Muffins"
  "Bops" and "Dabs" and "Crisps"
"Batter bread" and "Mush bread"
  "Corn sticks" and "Wisps"
"Mush," and "Cush" and "Grits"
  "Lye hominy" and "Gruel"
Say dat us must give up dese—
  Lawdy! Ain't it cruel?

If death hides in de corn pone
  What a nigger'll hatter do
Is die of Old Starvation
  And New Pellagra, too!

AN ALABAMA GOMBO

Aunt Chloe:
You wanter know how dis heah Gombo
Can ever be made so good?
Your fire, Young Miss, is bound to be dis:
Twelve hours er hick'ry wood.

Den okra and chicken and bacon to fry
And 'martoes to peel and stew;
Wid a nice bit er lamb, a slice of ham,
Maybe a young squab or two.

You must grate fresh corn,—Sho' as you born
'Twill thicken yo' soup just right!
Sage leaves prime—and a bit of thyme,
Dese can be gethered o'er night.

Den a onion round, fried just a neat brown,
A hand full of butter beans;
Den have yo' pot des bilin' hot—
Put all in and stir betweens.

Den sit and watch and stir dat hotch-potch
Us call it a all day job!
For it's 'bleeged to bile twel it's teetotal ile,—
Twel you cain't tell kid from squab!

Den: Have a dish? Lawdy! Ain't it rich?
A crisp, green pepper beside,
And a plate of rice, cooked dry and nice—
Best eatin' you ever tried!

Dat's a meal's meat a Colonel'd eat
Whilst a war waited over de way:
For I never ain't *not* seed a man leave dat pot
If only des *half* axed to stay!

UNCLE ISHAM'S WAY TO COOK A 'POSSUM

Uncle Isham:

Fust thing you ketch yo' 'possum,—
  And dat ain't easy, chile;
Sometime to ketch one 'possum
  I walk a good ten mile!
Den kill and scrape and clean him
  And lay him in a pan;
Den slip him in de oven—
  An ole brick oven, man!
Pour round a little water,
  Have de oven in a blaze!
Set 'taters also bakin'
  In skins de ole time ways.
When you see dem 'taters breakin'
  And lettin' sugar out
Why den des take and peel 'em
  And drap 'em 'round about
  Dat 'possum rich wid gravy—!
  Come, have a piece! Take some!
    Um-um! Um-um!
      Um-um!
        Um-um!

THE END OF THE ROW

Uncle Donum speaks:

Des look like I come to de end er my row—
Dough I uster carry Ole Massa's lead-hoe!
Las' year I los' my mule, and my wife, and my cow,
And dat sorter broke up my spirit, I 'low.

I don't wanter strike in de plow no mo',
Seem like de sun don't shine like it shin' befo'.
I miss my ole 'oman a-workin' by my side,
Like she uster do afo' she died.

Workin' long side er me, in and tho'o
Workin' des same as a man would do!
Den you can't go to crappin' widout any mule
No mo'n you can learn 'dout de book at school.

Dar set de empty churn in de cabin now—
You can't have buttermilk 'dout any cow.
Seem like de world all runnin' to weed,
'Pear like no good to put in de seed.

Don't matter what I plant, don't matter what I sow,
Look like I don't keer whe'er dey come up or no—
Livin-interes' wid me is de hard crap to grow—
Fer look like I'm clean at de end er my row.

Plantation Little People

MARK'S SANTA CLAUS

Mark speaks:

Christmas comin'? Yas, I know—
It done been right heah befo';
But Sandy Claws he don't know me—
Nigger mos' too black to see!

Got my name 'caze folks say dark
'Sider me 's a shinin' mark!
Sandy Claws a'ready come?
Left me things to des tote home?

Apples, candy, marbles, top—
I'll go crazy you don't stop!
Christmas come! Hi-yi! I know
'Taint come disa-away befo'!

Dat a fine man, Sandy Claws,
Bring a nigger alleys, taws—
He so good dat for a fac'
I b'lieve he hisse'f is—black!

PROGRESS OF A PICCANINNY

Aunt Dinah:

Dis chile's brung up pintedly right for sho',
He's fetch up de way dat he ought to go;
Dar's not a man's hat done tetch on his head—
Dat'd make him teeth hard de ole folks said.

Dar's a dog-tooth hangin' right now on his neck,
And a silver picayune, I 'spec'
And elder-pith on a cotton string,
And a conju'-bag and everything!

Us got his pallet-lock tied up tight,
And de almonds of his ears is rubbed up right;
Us ain't let de chile look into de glass—
(If a chile see itself it soon will pass)

Us tote no chunk of fire fo' his eyes,
Us ain't let nobody medjure his size—
Yas. If God sesso he'll grow and he'll thrive.
And one hund'ard years stay hearty and live!

LI'L' LONESOME

Li'l' Sam:

Uncle Ike sent me to wait on you, ma'am,
I ain't name nothin' but des Li'l' Sam.

No'm, I don't b'long to nobody at all,
My folks all died wid fever las' fall.

I ain't got no people, only des me,—
Uncle Ike 's des feller-servant-kin, you see.

But, oh, Miss, I useter have de clostest kins—
Oh, yas, ma'am, I sho' useter be twins!

But 'tother one's out in de grave yard now—
Dat's why I feel so lonesome, I 'low.

HIDING THE YOUNG

Black Mammy sings:

Black Sheep, Black Sheep,
Whar yo' little lamb?
'Way down in de valley—
And de buzzard flop he wing,
And de mockin' bird sing—
Po' li'l' lamb bleatin': Mammy!

Red cow, red cow,
Whar yo' little calf?
'Way down in de valley—
And de buzzard flop he wing,
And de mockin' bird sing—
Po' li'l' calf cryin': Mammy!

Grey mare, grey mare,
Whar yo' little colt?
'Way down in de valley—
And de buzzard flop he wing,
And de mockin' bird sing—
Po' li'l' colt whinny: Mammy!

Nanny goat, nanny goat,
Whar yo' little kid?
'Way down in de valley—
And de buzzard flop he wing,
And de mockin' bird sing—
Po' li'l' kid baa-in': Mammy!

Ole sow, ole sow,
Whar yo' li'l' pig?
'Way down in de valley—
And de buzzard flop he wing,
And de mockin' bird sing—
Po' li'l' pig squealin': Mammy!

Yaller dog, yaller dog,
  Whar yo' li'l' pup?
'Way down in de valley—
  And de buzzard flop he wing,
    And de mockin' bird sing—
      Po' li'l' pup barkin': Mammy!

Tabby cat, tabby cat,
  Whar yo' little kit?
'Way down in de valley—
  And de buzzard flop he wing,
    And de mockin' bird sing—
      Po' li'l' kit mewin': Mammy!

Beasty bear, beasty bear,
  Whar yo' li'l' cub?
'Way down in de valley—
  And de buzzard flop he wing,
    And de mockin' bird sing—
      Po' li'l' cub whinin': Mammy!

White doe, white doe,
  Whar yo' little faun?
'Way down in de valley—
  And de buzzard flop he wing,
    And de mockin' bird sing—
      Po' li'l' faun sobbin': Mammy!

PLANTATION PLAY SONG

Black Mammy:

Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
I'll holler and shout and tromp about,
And break my neck if I can't get out,—
But I leap so swift dat I leap right out
And leave dem ladies' gyarden!

Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
And dey skip and sing and dance and swing,
And whirl and twirl me in dis ring,—
Dey's all as pretty as a rose in spring,—
And dey keep me in dis gyarden!

Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
I must choose one, and I can't choose all,—
I'll take de tall, I'll take de small,
I'll choose wid eyes against de wall—
While I'm in dem ladies' gyarden!

Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
Some's bright, I see, some's light mustee,
And some 's as black as black can be,
Oh, which is de best to suit to 'me
When I leave dese ladies' gyarden!

Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
Oh, I'm in dem ladies' gyarden,
Oh, I hatter choose, and I hatter loose,
So I take de lightest trippin' shoes
Dough I want to give to all dey dues
When I leave dem ladies' gyarden!

DE BABY'S FEET

Aunt Dinah:

If you wants dis baby to walk right soon,
His feet be swift as a slim new moon!
I'll tell you what you'll hatter do—
(It's a ole nigger sign, but it sho' is true)
You must sweep off de top of de baby's feet,
And sweep 'em nice and sweep 'em neat,
Wid a tiny bit of straw from de broom:
Dat'll make him walk all over de room!

BREEZE IN THE BOUGH

Black Mammy sings:

Hop light, ladies,
  Cake's all dough;
Never mind the weather
  So the wind don't blow!

Jump light, ladies,
  Wine all lees;
Never mind the weather
  So us des get a breeze!

Skip light ladies,
  Pie's all crust;
Never mind the wind
  So it don't raise a dust!

Trip light, ladies,
  Beer's all foam;
Never mind the weather
  So the wind blow home!

Hop light, ladies,
  Nummine how;
We'll rock-a-bye to sleep
  When de breeze in de bough!

QUALITY

Uncle Isham speaks:

At Christmas my Ole Mistis she
Give th'ee fine dinners, don't you see;
She give de invites out to me
And I totes 'em 'round on de nag, Barbee.

To de fust us axes de Quality,
  Dem wid blue blood and ancestry;
To de nex' us bid de Bob-Quality,
  Dem what ain't, but'd like to be.

To de last us call de Commonality,
  Plain folks 'dout no trimmin's dee,
Dey can't talk 'bout what used to be,
  Ain't got nothin' but raw money.

But, oh, la! now, sence niggers is free,
  De rail on top is Commonality,
De nex' in line is Bob-Quality—
  And de fine old Quality—Whar is dee?

In White and Black

DADDY AND DE BOY

Uncle Sampson:

Who know whar de fishes swim quick and sleek,
'Way down by de ole plantation creek?
Who fish for de trout and de brim airy one?
Daddy and de li'l' Man-Son!

Who know how to halter dat skittish colt—
Hold him by de mane when he try to bolt?
When de wile colt buck—des call dat fun!
Daddy and de li'l' Man-Son!

Who know how to set wid a steady stride?
Him leap from his cradle knowin' how to ride!
He feared of a horse? Not nai'y one—
Daddy and de li'l' Man-Son!

Who know how to handle dem reins like a man—
Us speedin' de track wid de trottin' span?
Who dat holler when de race good run?
Daddy and de li'l' Man-Son!

Who know how to wrastle all de Quarter roun'—
Git all de li'l' niggers down on de groun'?—
Who most can lift up a half of a ton?
Daddy and de li'l' Man-Son!

Who gives de gang odds on de jump or de run,
And scurse he blowed when de race be run,
Been beat, nor left, nor pass by none!
Daddy and de li'l' Man-Son!

Who love for to hunt dem sq'il in de wood?
And he aim so straight and he shoot so good,
And he bring 'em right down wid his own li'l' gun—
Daddy and de li'l' Man-Son!

Who gwine to dat Congress when he's a man,
Be a Colonel, den a Gen'al, des fast as he can?
Keep leadin' de race like his folks began—
Daddy's Ole Massa's Grandson!

HUSH LI'L' BABY

Black Mammy sings:

Hush, li'l' Baby, don't say a word—
Mammy gwine to buy you a mockin' bird,
When dat bird begin to sing—
Knock on de hammer—Ting-a-ling!
Mammy gwine to buy you a finger-ring:

When dat ring begin to wear
Mammy gwine to buy you a rockin' chair:
When dat chair begin to rock
Mammy gwine to buy you a ever'-day-clock—
When dat clock go tick-a-tock!
Mammy gwine to buy you a blue silk frock:
When dat frock begin to tear,
Mammy gwine to buy you a golden stair!
When dat stair begin to creak
Mammy gwine buy you a doll can speak:
When dat doll begin to break
Mammy gwine to buy you a caraway-cake:
When dat cake begin to melt
Mammy gwine buy you a diamond belt:
When dat belt begin to bin'
Mammy gwine buy you a red-rose-vine:
When dat vine begin to grow
Mammy gwine to buy you a coach and fo':
When dat coach begin to stop
Mammy gwine buy you a spinnin'-top!
When dat top begin to spin
Mammy gwine to buy you a guinea-hin:
When dat hin begin to squawk—
Now den, Honey, don't you talk—
Hush-sh-sh!

BABY'S FIRST DRINK OF WATER

Black Mammy speaks:

Baby must take her very first drink
Out of a golden cup, I think—
From a teeny, weeny golden cup
Baby must take her very first sup.

Dat'll insu' her riches, you see,
And make her happy as can be!
So her very first drink she must behold
In Mother's thimble of pure gold!

MAMMY'S SLEEPY SONG

Black Mammy sings?
Bird-eye-lady! 'Pend on me!
Pretty little lady, lemme see
Who dat bird wid eye so bright
Shine like you'n day or night?
Bye, my pretty little baby, bye,
Eye as bright as a jay-bird's eye!

Sweet mouf lady! Red-bird wing!
Pretty little lady! Lemme sing—
Mouf as soft as a li'l' bird nest
Mouf as red as a robin's breast!
Bye, my pretty little baby, oh—
So red mouf, I love you so!

Short nose lady! Heah you goes!
Pretty little lady, you suppose
Bird gwine want a nice li'l' nose
Yas, my Honey, des like yo's?
No, my pretty little baby, no—
Sleepin' softly now for sho'—
(Hush—'sh—)

Pink ear lady! What you hear?
Pretty little lady, it appear
Dat you is in Shut-eye-town
Drivin' dream-bird wings around—
Bye, my pretty little baby, you
Sweet as honey, fresh as dew!
('Sh—hush—'sh—'sh—)

Bird eye lady! 'Pend on me!
Pretty little baby, heah you be
Fast asleep on Mammy's knee,
Rockin' like a bird in a tree—
    Bye, my pretty little baby, bye,
    Eye shut very tight, I spy—
    (Yas—Mammy's Lady!
        Yas—
    Hush—'sh—'sh—'sh—)

GOD'S LI'L' JEWELRY

Black Mammy:

Who done tangle up Mammy's yarn,
Makin' cat's cradle by de ole barn,
Makin' crow's-foot and eyes and mo'—
Mangle de thread so Mam' can't sew?
(Bless dat chile!
Laughin' at Mammy all de while—)
God ain't made no whiter pearl
Dan yo' teef, my little girl,
Mostes' precious thing to me—
My chile God's Li'l' Jewelry.

Who dat took Mammy's thimble now?
Been cuttin' biscuit's, I allow;
Nice li'l' biscuits for us to eat;
Dat chile's cookin' taste mighty sweet.
(Bless dat chile—
Peepin' at Mammy all de while)
God ain't got no turuoise blue
Deeper'n dese eyes. My Honey, you
Cost'iest thing round here I see—
What cost mo'n God's Jewelry?

Done took Mam's handk-cher, what you think?
De while I's takin' forty wink;
Made a swing out it on dat tree,
Mam's keys rockin', like dolls, I see—
(I be boun'!
Best not drap noddin' *she* aroun'!)
God ain't paint no ruby red
As dis baby's lips foresaid—
What my li'l' girl'd ruther be
Dan des God's Li'l' Jewelry?

Who dat pick up Mammy's ole shoe?
Made a boat out it—'hew—'ew—whew!
Dar in de wash tub floatin' roun'!
Mistifis chile, I do be boun'—
(Bless de chile!
Curls all wet up now dis while)
God ain't got no shinin' gole
Brighter'n dis chile's hair do hol'
Babe, you 's des cleam deavenly)
'Caze you's God's Li'l' Jewelry.

Now what you done wid Mammy's 'specs?
Lawsy me! What'll you do nex'?
Yoked de kittens wid Mammy's 'specs
Dat's most enough to git me vex.
(Bless de chile)
A-kissin' Mammy all dis while)
God ain't got no diamond dye
Brighter'n de light of dis chile's eye—
Yas, dem angels done agree
Dat you *is* God's Jewelry.

WHAT MAMMY KNOWS

Black Mammy:

De seventh chile of a seventh chile
  Folks say see ghosts;
Dunno 'bout dat, but I know dis chile
  See de Heavenly Hosts—
    'Caze ev'y little while
    Dat chile she smile!

Folks say dimples is a sign of luck,
  Dunno how dat be:
I know angels kiss dese dimples heah,
  'Caze dat I see—
    For ev'y little once in awhile—
    Dat chile she smile!

Dese fat little creases heah, dey say,
  Around her knee,
Gwine tie folks heart strings tight to her;
  And dat may be—
    'Caze ev'y little once in awhile
    How she do smile!

Nigger signs good and bad are true;
  But no ill dare
To come, my baby chile, whilst you
  Are in my care:
    She know dat, too—
    'Caze ev'y little once in awhile
    Watch how she smile.

THE BLESSED BOOK

I wish I could read in dis blessed Book,
But it do me good to only des look
At dese marks dat my Ole Mistis made
'Fo' dey laid her yonder in de sycamore shade.

If I hold it up or top-side-down,
Don't make no diffunce good is found
'Twixt dese two lids, it's dar some way,
De Lord put it dar and it's dar to stay!

'Pear like as I look at dese pencil mark
Past time git bright and dis time dark,
I sees my Ole Miss a-readin' of de Word,
I hears her sing de songs I useter heard.

Lord, I does hope in de Golden Lan'
Dey'll keep a small place on de ole time plan
Whar my Ole Miss and her niggers can stay
Nigh togedder like dey uset in de ole time way:

Dis seperatin' White and Black in de Next
May be good for a nigger preacher text—
But, oh, my Lord, I wants to go
To de ve'y same heaven whar Miss is,—sho'—!

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